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ABSTRACT

Findings of a study that examined the impact of organizational structures for shared decision making on teacher participation are presented in this paper, with attention to the types of issues that were raised and the nature of changes introduced. A longitudinal study was conducted of 12 high schools in 11 states for an average of 17 months per school. Six schools with shared decision-making (SDM) structures were compared with six schools with traditional administrative structures. Data were derived from interviews with a total of 191 administrators, teachers, and school staff--105 from SDM schools and 86 from traditional schools. Findings suggest that the presence of participatory decision-making structures did not necessarily lead to enhanced teacher creativity; in fact, most faculty attempted to slow down the pace of change. Although teachers' morale improved, their influence on decision-making was usually limited within boundaries determined by the principal. However, shared decision making does provide a forum for teacher-administrator interaction and shared knowledge. Two tables are included. (Contains 16 references.) (LMI)

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SHARED DECISION MAKING ABOUT WHAT?

A Comparison of Schools With and Without Teacher Participation*

Carol H. Weiss

Harvard University

Occasional Paper No. 15

September 1992

EA 024 377

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NCEL OCCASIONAL PAPER AND CASE SERIES

OP#1 ***Re-Thinking School Leadership: An Agenda for Research and Reform*** **by Lee G. Bolman, Susan Moore Johnson, Jerome T. Murphy, and Carol H. Weiss; Harvard University (February 1990), 42 pages**

This paper presents a basic model of the relationship between leadership, situation, and outcomes. Personal characteristics of leaders and the situation in which leaders find themselves both influence what leaders do, which in turn influences the kinds of outcomes that they produce. Embedded in the model are three questions: "What is good school leadership?" "How does good school leadership come about?" and "What will good school leadership mean in the future?" Systematic ways of approaching these questions are also presented.

OP#2 ***Preparing School Administrators for the Twenty-First Century: The Reform Agenda*** **by Joseph Murphy; Vanderbilt University (May 1990), 47 pages**

In the second wave of school reform reports and studies of the 1980s, much attention has been directed to issues of school administration and leadership. Yet, to date, no comprehensive analysis of these calls for changes in school administration has been undertaken. The purpose of this paper is to provide such a review. The goals of the paper are threefold: (1) to explain the reasons for the calls for reform of school administration, (2) to review the major studies and reports on education reform from 1982 to 1988 and (3) to discuss educational administration reform issues that need further attention.

OP#3 ***What Makes a Difference? School Context, Principal Leadership, and Student Achievement*** **by Philip Hallinger, Leonard Bickman, and Ken Davis; Vanderbilt University (June 1990), 35 pages**

This paper addresses the general question, what makes a difference in school learning? We report the results of a secondary analysis of data collected as part of the Tennessee School Improvement Incentives Project. We utilized the instructional leadership model developed by researchers at the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development to guide our analyses. This conceptual model makes provision for analysis of principal leadership in relation to features of the school environment, school-level organization, and student outcomes. The paper focuses on the following research questions: (1) What antecedents appear to influence principal leadership behavior? (2) What impact does principal leadership have on the organization and its outcomes? (3) To what extent is the Far West Lab's instructional leadership framework supported empirically by the data collected in this study?

OP#4 ***School Restructuring: A Case Study In Teacher Empowerment*** **by Katherine C. Boles; Harvard University (September 1990), 58 pages**

School districts around the country are in the process of initiating projects to restructure their schools. A small but growing number of these restructuring projects have been initiated by

teachers, but as yet little has been written documenting the experience of classroom practitioners involved in such efforts. The purpose of this study is to add teachers' voices to the literature on restructuring. This project restructured a portion of a school and altered the work of a group of third and fourth grade teachers.

OP#5 ***Educational Reform in the 1980s: Explaining Some Surprising Success*** **by Joseph Murphy; Vanderbilt University (September 1990), 28 pages**

In this paper issues of success and failure of reform initiatives are discussed from both sides of the aisle. The paper begins with a review of the financial, political, and organizational factors which normally support the position that reform measures are likely to result in few substantive improvements. Next, the argument is made that educational reform recommendations have been surprisingly successful, and some speculations as to the reasons for this unexpected outcome are presented.

OP#6 ***New Settings and Changing Norms for Principal Development*** **by Philip Hallinger; Vanderbilt University and Robert Wimpelberg; University of New Orleans (January 1991), 32 pages**

Recently analysts have identified a variety of features that distinguish emerging administrative training programs from traditional ones. The rapid, but non-systematic growth in organizations providing administrative development services during the 1980's led to considerable natural variation in programmatic content as well as in organizational processes. In particular, significant variations emerged in the operation of state-sponsored leadership academies and local principals' centers. The purpose of this paper is to analyze variations in current approaches to educational leadership development. The paper addresses three questions: (1) What is the range of variation among emerging staff development programs for school leaders on dimensions of program content and organizational process? (2) What can we learn from the naturally occurring variations in administrative development? (3) What are the most likely and promising directions for administrative development programs in the next decade?

OP#7 ***Images of Leadership*** **by Lee G. Bolman; Harvard University and Terrence E. Deal; Vanderbilt University (January 1991), 21 pages**

This project has undertaken a major study of the "frames," or orientations, that leaders use to guide their understanding of their work. The investigators have developed a set of survey instruments to measure four leadership orientations (structural, human resource, political, and symbolic), and collected data from leaders and their constituents in both education and the private sector. Their research results show that the four leadership orientations do capture significant elements of how leaders approach their task, and that those leadership variables are significantly associated with effectiveness. The results further show that the variables which predict effectiveness as a *manager* are different from those that predict effectiveness as a *leader*. In particular, structural and rational orientations are primarily predictive of manager effectiveness. This research was reported at the AERA meeting in April, 1990.

OP#8 ***Trouble in Paradise: Teacher Conflicts in Shared Decision Making*** **by Carol H. Weiss, Joseph Cambone, and Alexander Wyeth; Harvard University (April 1991), 26 pages**

Many educators advocate teacher participation in school decision-making as one strategy for improving schools. Through interviews with teachers and administrators in high schools that have adopted some version of shared decision making, the authors locate both advantages and disadvantages. Advantages center on great commitment and "ownership" of decisions. Disadvantages include, besides heavy time demands, the necessity for teachers to confront and negotiate with each other, a process that requires skills many teachers lack. There may also be conflicts with administrators, often because of unclear definitions of authority and responsibility. Suggestions are made for overcoming such problems.

OP#9 ***Restructuring Schools: Fourteen Elementary and Secondary Teachers' Perspectives on Reform*** **by Joseph Murphy, Carolyn M. Evertson, and Mary L. Radnofsky; Vanderbilt University (May 1991), 34 pages**

Few efforts have been made to inject classroom teachers' voices into discussions on restructuring. In this article, we report on one exploratory study that begins to address this oversight. We interviewed 14 teachers from diverse backgrounds about their views on the restructuring movement in general. We wanted to hear what they thought of the concept and to determine what effects they anticipated in restructuring schools. We also elicited their perceptions about what changes they would make in both the schools and classrooms if they were thrust into a school undergoing restructuring. We found that, while in some ways the views of these teachers were consistent with prevailing perspectives in the restructuring movement, in other cases, their preferences were at odds with the general body of literature on restructuring. We concluded that, while these teachers are optimistic about the possibilities of fundamental school reform, they remain skeptical about their ability to change the current educational system.

)P#10 ***The Effects of the Educational Reform Movement on Departments of Educational Leadership*** **by Joseph Murphy; Vanderbilt University (May 1991), 34 pages**

This paper reviews the types of revisions that preparation programs in educational leadership have begun to make in response to three related sets of pressures brought on by the reform movement of the 1980s: pressures bearing on school administrators from the larger reform agenda, i.e., improving education across the board; general critiques of and calls for improvement in educational leadership; and specific analyses and demands for change in administrator preparation programs. The results are based on questionnaires completed by 74 chairpersons in departments of educational leadership. The emerging picture is mixed. On the one hand, departments of educational administration have begun to respond to the pressures for change. In addition, for better or worse, discernable patterns in these revisions are generally consistent with the implicit demands for improvement that lace the critical reviews of the field and with the more explicit recommendations contained in the NPBEA and NCEEA reform reports. On the other hand, the response has been moderate (at best) in intensity and mixed in focus.

)P#11 ***A Typology of the Assistant Principal: A Model of Orientation to the Administrative Career*** **by Catherine Marshall; Vanderbilt University, Barbara Mitchell; School District of Philadelphia, and Richard Gross; Boyertown Senior High School, Pennsylvania (June 1991), 30 pages**

This paper describes the working lives of twenty assistant principals, exploring the interactions between personal values and organizational contexts. School districts' individual norms and traditions present unique conditions, restraints, and possibilities for these new administrators, who respond in a variety of ways. The study identifies five distinct career orientations, linking the administrators' early socialization experiences and their eventual mobility. This typology, derived from a variety of case studies, provides a basis for structuring recruitment, training, support, and selection practices for aspirants to administrative careers. This approach can inform school districts' approaches to staff development as well as individuals' career choices.

)P#12 ***The Cultural Chasm Between Administrator and Teacher Cultures: A Micropolitical Puzzle*** **by Catherine Marshall; University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (April 1992), 29 pages**

This paper examines the complex relationships between teachers and school administrators from a micropolitical perspective. Public schools have long enforced a bureaucratic separation of roles, professional status, socialization, and training, leading to value conflicts and factionalism. The move from teaching to administration can be especially traumatic, involving alienation from one peer group and gradual acceptance into another. Through analysis of interviews with new administrators, the authors explore the underlying causes of these conflicts and shifts in perspective. To what extent do teachers and administrators differ in their understandings of school culture? How do new school leaders acquire the political skills and attitudes inherent to administration, and how do these attitudes affect interactions with teachers?

)P#13 ***Developing the Thinking Strategies of Instructional Leaders*** **by Philip Hallinger; Vanderbilt University, C.E. McCary; Durham North Carolina Schools (March 1992), 23 pages**

In light of the critical role that principals play in school improvement, the inadequacy of current principal preparation presents a major problem for policy and practice. This article examines emerging research on instructional leadership and call for leadership training that emphasizes strategic thinking. The authors argue that research must address the reasoning that underlies the exercise of leadership, rather than describe discrete behaviors of effective leaders.

The article includes a description of a computer simulation designed to facilitate the transfer from research to the practice of leadership. The simulation model asks aspiring principals to choose a combination of improvement strategies using research-based cost and benefit information. The authors discuss their experiences with the simulation and offer suggestions for the design and delivery of administrative training and development.

OP#14 ***Restructuring Schooling: The Equity Infrastructure*** **by Joseph Murphy, Vanderbilt University, (June 1992), 33 pages**

This report discusses how restructuring approaches to school improvement are likely to promote further advances in educational equity. The report briefly defines restructuring and equity, examines three ethics driving attempts to transform schools for greater equity, and reviews the restructuring literature to examine measures that offer the most hope for enhancing equity. The relevant information for this report came from literature in educational policy, school improvement, school restructuring, and school reform.

Equity issues are at the center of current initiatives to restructure schooling. These initiatives are in two areas: (1) fundamental changes in how we conceive of learning, education, and schooling and (2) specific changes in structures and learning processes in schools.

OP#15 ***Shared Decision Making About What? A Comparison of Schools With and Without Teacher Participation*** **by Carol H. Weiss; Harvard University, (September 1992), 36 pages**

Twelve public high schools in the U.S., six with structures for teacher participation in decision making and six without, were studied to identify differences in the types of issues about which decisions were made and the nature of the changes introduced. Longitudinal investigation disclosed few differences in the degree of attention devoted to issues of curriculum, pedagogy, or students. In terms of kinds of decisions, schools with shared decision making were more likely to adopt changes on the current reform agenda, but teacher participation did not seem to be the main motor for these decisions.

CASE STUDIES

'S#1 ***The Prince and the Principal*** will serve as a powerful discussion piece for aspiring or practicing administrators, as well as for teachers interested in leadership. In it, a new principal begins her tenure at a troubled Chicago elementary school, met with resistance and animosity from a group of "old guard" teachers. Eager to correct what she sees as glaring problems, she feels herself blocked in all efforts to effect positive change, from minor improvements to more significant school restructuring. After a series of frustrations, she makes a decisive but risky change in perspective and strategy. The case focuses on the most difficult challenge faced by new leaders: to reconcile one's emerging skills and understanding to an idiosyncratic school culture. Topics for discussion include: the importance of gaining the support of teachers, parents, and other administrators; the value of setting clear goals for improvement; and the decision to persist despite the slow pace of change.

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SHARED DECISION MAKING ABOUT WHAT?
A Comparison of Schools With and Without Teacher Participation

by

Carol H. Weiss

One of the attractive reforms in what is broadly, if vaguely, called the "restructuring movement" is the inclusion of teachers in the processes of school-wide decision making. Structures for shared decision making give teachers a voice in what had largely been principal-made decisions. This paper examines some of the consequences of teacher participation in six high schools that have adopted participatory structures and compares their experience with six high schools with traditional administrative structures. In these schools, shared decision making, or "teacher empowerment,"[1] came about in a variety of ways -- through the initiative of a reformist principal, through directives from the school board or superintendent (sometimes with agreement from the teachers union), or through adoption of a wider reform that also involved parents and community members in school decision making.

Shared decision making, as we use the term, is a formal system for the representation of teachers in a decision-making body. A few schools have practiced shared decision making for 15 or 20 years. These are mostly elementary schools with small staffs, and shared decision making has required little if any structural apparatus. In high schools, with their larger size and greater complexity, informal mechanisms for consultation are not as simple and may even be seen as consultations with like-minded cronies or with selected spokespersons for particular views. In high schools formal structures are introduced. Our study concentrates on high schools that have structural arrangements for teachers' systematic participation.

Many rationales have been offered for including teachers in school decision processes. In fact, the justificatory baggage is so eclectic that shared decision making (SDM) begins to seem like an all-purpose solution to a host of different and unrelated problems. There are three constellations of reasons that are offered in support of SDM.

Improved school performance

(1) Advocates claim that SDM will yield better policies. Because teachers have detailed, variegated knowledge about students and curriculum, decisions in which they participate will be grounded in intimate understanding of context -- and will thus be wiser.

(2) Given the areas of teacher expertise, decisions under SDM will focus more directly on teaching, learning, and student issues. Unlike administrators who devote serious time to bureaucratic concerns and are wedded to paperwork and routine, teachers will point the decision-making apparatus at things that matter to student performance.

(3) SDM will unleash teacher creativity. Once given a voice, teachers will supply fresh ideas and innovative proposals. They may even help to revolutionize teaching itself, devising practices that encourage "teaching for understanding," critical thinking, and higher-order knowledge. SDM, it is claimed, will create conditions that reorient teaching from "telling" to "eliciting thinking" from students.

Teacher professionalism

(1) Advocates claim that SDM will treat teachers as professionals who are in charge of their own practice. It signals to teachers and parents and the community that teachers, as professionals, are worthy of regard and respect. It heightens their sense of vocation and improves their morale.

(2) SDM gives teachers a say about their work conditions. It enables them to identify problems that interfere with teaching and design appropriate solutions.

(3) Because they share in decision making, teachers become committed to the decisions that are made. They gain a sense of ownership of the decisions and are more likely to carry them out. They also can be held accountable for what the school

does and does not do.

The symbolism of participation

(1) SDM represent democracy in action. Irrespective of its outcomes, it gives those affected by a decision a say in the making of decisions and reduces power differentials in the educational system. It is intrinsically fair and democratic, and it provides a model to students of what democracy is all about.

(2) But symbolism can operate in negative ways as well. SDM may give teachers merely a semblance of authority while real authority remains securely anchored in the principal's office or the district headquarters. It can be a gambit of smoke and mirrors, used simply to make teachers feel good. Or it can be an inexpensive means to deflect demands for school reform, a cheap way to show that the system is "doing something," without in effect doing much of anything.

(3) SDM might even be inspired by more Machiavellian scripts. Some see it as a response to community criticism, a way to spread the blame for schools' poor performance by putting teachers' heads beside administrators' heads on the chopping block. Others wonder if it is not designed to bog teachers down in time-consuming committees and endless quests for "vision statements," so that they do not challenge the powers-that-be. There is even some concern that SDM is a way to undermine teachers' unions. By giving teachers increased control over their work life, SDM may reduce some of the appeal of unions.

Those are the claims. Without much evidence pro or con, SDM has become a rallying cry in the current reform movement, and it is being adopted -- or imposed on -- schools all over the country. Therefore, it is useful to see which of the claims stand up under empirical review.

Focus of This Inquiry

Here I look at the claims about improved school performance. Specifically, I examine the following hypotheses:

(1) that shared decision making focuses attention on issues of student performance. Because teachers have a central role in decision making, it is expected that they will direct school attention less to administrative procedures and controls and more to curriculum, teaching, and students.

(2) that the decisions that SDM bodies come up with are innovative and progressive. It is expected that because teachers have an opportunity to move out from under the rules and regulations of the bureaucratic apparatus and call upon their own knowledge and creativity, they will craft forward-looking decisions.

We test the claims with data from a longitudinal study of 12 high schools in 11 states, from Maine to Florida, Texas to Washington state. Half the schools had implemented a structure for teacher participation in school decisions, and half were run in traditional principal-led style. We interviewed administrators, teachers, and other school staff such as guidance counselors and librarians. Each interview consisted of a structured set of open-ended questions and asked about leadership in the school. Questions were centered on one decision that the respondent had been involved with and the way in which the decision played out from start to finish (if there was a finish). We followed the schools for an average of 17 months each.[2] In all, we completed 193 interviews over a period of 2 1/2 years. All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

Topics about Which Schools Made Decisions

We analyzed the subject of the one main decision that each respondent volunteered to talk about in the interview. When we sum responses across the 12 schools (see Table 1), we find that the specific topics about which decisions were made were (in order of frequency): student discipline, including decisions about tardiness, absences, dress code, security, and so on (31 mentions); school governance and the decision-making process,

including installation of procedures for shared decision making (21 mentions); school schedule, which had to do mainly with changes in the number and length of periods in the school day (20 mentions); changes in courses in the curriculum, such as revising, adding, and dropping courses (18); and change or addition of programs (14). If we combine all mentions of curriculum, which would include changes in courses, programs, schedule, and planning/philosophy, curriculum have the highest frequency of mention (67).

Note that we asked respondents to identify their own issue. The interviewer suggested that they choose a decision that the school had been engaged with in the past year, of school-wide relevance, of which they had first-hand knowledge. The interviewer mentioned as examples a change related to curriculum or program. Within those bounds, the issues that respondents identified were presumably those salient to them.[3]

What Do Schools Make Decisions About?

Table 1 shows the subject matter of the one main decision[4] that each respondent discussed in the interview (N=191). Two respondents did not name a specific issue and are excluded from the table. Table 2 shows the number of schools in which the subject was discussed. In some cases, most of the mentions of a particular subject came from the staff of one school. For example, in the shared decision-making (SDM) schools, the 14 mentions of organization/schedule of the school day came from two schools, where a change in the number of class periods and/or the length of periods was a highly salient issue. Eleven of the mentions actually came from one school.

When we compare schools with and without SDM, we find two main differences in the issues they addressed. SDM schools spent considerable time and effort on decisions involved with the decision process itself. Eighteen of 105 respondents mentioned an issue dealing with the decision-making process, compared to three respondents (out of 86) in traditionally run schools. Since a number of the SDM schools were still in the relatively early stages of adopting SDM, they were devoting a good part of their energies to getting the machinery organized and running. In one school that had adopted a highly publicized SDM process, half of all respondents on the first wave of interviews discussed

Table 1. Topic of Decisions that Engaged the School As Volunteered by Respondents*

	SDM* Schools (N=105)		Traditional Schools (N=86)	
Governance of the School	24		4	
Decision-making processes, structure		18		3
Budgeting		6		1
Discipline (tardiness, absence, dress code, vandalism, security)	7		24	
Curriculum	36		31	
Courses		8		10
Programs		6		8
Schedule/organization		14		6
Planning, standards, philosophy		5		4
Other		3		3
Pedagogy	2		1	
Student Issues	9		3	
Student initiatives		4		-
Student advising, services		3		2
Other		2		1
Teacher Issues	12		9	
Hiring, surplusing		4		3
Other (assignment, smoking, supervision, etc.)		8		6
Testing	-		9	
Facilities and equipment	5		1	
Accreditation	4		-	
Food service, schedule	4		-	
Other	2		4	

*One decision reported per respondent
*SDM = shared decision making

Table 2. Topic of Decisions that Engaged the School
Number of Schools in Which Topic was Mentioned

	SDM* Schools (N=6)		Traditional Schools (N=6)	
Governance of the School	5		2	
Decision-making processes, structure		5		2
Budgeting		3		1
Discipline (tardiness, absence, dress code, vandalism, security)	3		5	
Curriculum	6		6	
Courses		5		3
Programs		3		4
Schedule/organization		2		3
Planning, standards, philosophy		3		2
Other		1		1
Pedagogy	2		1	
Student Issues	4		2	
Student initiatives		2		-
Student advising, services		3		2
Other		2		1
Teacher Issues	5		6	
Hiring, surplusing		2		2
Other (assignment, smoking, supervision, etc.)		4		4
Testing	-		2	
Facilities and equipment	4		1	
Accreditation	2		-	
Food service, schedule	2		-	
Other	2		3	

*SDM = shared decision making

issues relating to operation of the process. Even after three or four years of SDM, a train of sub-decisions often had to be made about functions, procedures, and allocation of responsibilities. One school in our sample had been operating under collective decision making since the time it opened its doors 13 years earlier, and even there, one respondent described an issue that hinged on conflict in the jurisdictions of two SDM bodies, and two other people discussed the realignment of responsibilities between the two committees.

An example of a response that had to do with governance was this statement about the introduction of the system:

> The major program that has been put into effect was one that I alluded to earlier, that school-based management decision...It was voted upon by faculty members, whether or not they wanted to be part of this program...It's a big change because it's taken first of all resources to do it. The main thing it's taken is the commitment of faculty to give a great deal of extra time...[A42-1FL][5]

In another reference to governance, a respondent in another school spoke about the difficulty of getting teachers to work together on school decisions. She said:

> We started our school based planning...And one of the first tasks that we had was to begin to get the faculty to pull together as a unit because we were so divided in various groups that no one seemed to get along with anyone else...[T]he teachers at the beginning did not believe that they could make decisions and they did not believe that they would have much of any input in it. So it took a lot of preliminary groundwork, meeting in a lot of committees, because one of the biggest problems was knowing where to go with our decision making. [T44-15WA]

Responses that mentioned the issue of budgeting or allocating funds might also be subsumed under the rubric of governance, because most of these responses had to do with participation in deciding where money was to be spent. Thus, for example, one department head said:

> When we sit down to divide up the budget, many times there's -- you could call it a discussion, you could call it spirited, you could call it give and take. It all depends on your point of view. And that's just basically your department heads sitting down and saying, 'We've got X dollars; now what do we do with it?' And of course you would expect every department head to figure that they deserved the lion's share. And you wouldn't expect them to be any other way. [D42-1 3FL]

If we include budgeting with governance, 24 respondents in 5 different SDM schools mentioned governance, compared to 3 respondents in 2 traditionally managed schools.

Another big difference in the nature of the issues was the higher salience of discipline in traditionally organized schools. Twenty-four respondents (out of 86) in traditionally managed schools brought up an issue relating to tardiness, absences, dress code, or discipline. These respondents came from 5 of the 6 schools. In two schools, half the respondents chose to talk about a discipline issue. In contrast, in all the SDM schools, a total of only 7 respondents (from 3 schools) raised issues about discipline.

Among the concerns that people in non-SDM schools raised were these:

> An issue was the dress code, and that was successful. And I have to attribute that to our principal; he did a fabulous job with that. Our boys [now] have short hair, to their collar, no earrings...Some teachers kept saying, 'What does that have to do with learning?' I feel that it has a lot to do with it, because I believe that it's an attitude problem...[T46-12TX]

Another respondent talked about safety from outsiders' intrusion into the school. His was the most serious view of safety issues in our study. He said:

> Security has taken priority. Establishing a security program in order to have people in place to insure that there were no outside influences or factors that would interfere with the school program. We have ten security stations at this point, at major locations, strategic locations, throughout the facility. [A43-11IL]

A teacher in another school identified the main issue as student tardiness to class. She said:

> [T]hat's how we came about with morning detention. And what we did about kids who did not go to morning detention [was] we decided to keep them in school [after school hours] if they skipped morning detention. [D39-11VA]

The fact that non-SDM schools are much more likely to dwell on discipline issues than are SDM schools might suggest a better relationship with students in SDM schools. However, before leaping to such a conclusion, it is important to note that 3 of the traditionally managed schools had student populations that were almost exclusively youngsters of color from poor or working class backgrounds, and they accounted for 15 of the 24 references to discipline. Schools with substantial minority populations, especially in low-income areas, may feel a strong need to maintain order and stability

within the building. Such a belief may give rise both to managerial control held tightly in the principal's office and to a search for firm rules and strong enforcement of codes for student behavior. To look at the data another way, three of the four schools that stressed discipline (not all the same schools as in the previous sentences) were in the southern part of the U.S., and southern schools accounted for 16 of the 24 mentions. It may be that southern traditions, irrespective of race, place an emphasis on seemly behavior, courtesy, and respect for persons in authority. Southern norms may lead to the frequency of decisions about disciplinary issues in the school.[6]

Recall that there were occasional references to discipline in SDM schools as well. One example:

> [V]andalism...that was a big issue...And what was happening was a lot of things being destroyed in areas where students were being confined to study, like in the auditorium. Through just the fact of letting everybody know that it was happening, discussing it openly with all of the students -- and not just some of the offenders, not punishing the offenders and letting everybody else go "Why is this person being suspended?' -- being real open about it and letting everyone know, then it became a school issue rather than individual issues. [T32-1ME]

Still, a major difference between SDM and non-SDM schools, whatever the reason, is much more frequent attention to issues of discipline in schools where teachers do not share in decision making.

Curriculum Issues

When we look at issues related to curriculum, we find almost an equal percentage of mentions in the two categories of schools. Thirty-six respondents in SDM schools (34% of respondents) and 31 (36% of respondents) in traditionally managed schools described decisions regarding curriculum, including revision of courses, new programs, changes in the schedule of periods in the school day, and other curricular changes. People in all 6 SDM schools and all 6 traditionally run schools chose curriculum as the decision to talk about.

Many of the curricular decisions, in both types of schools, were modest in scope. For example, a teacher in an SDM school talked about aligning Advanced Placement

(AP) history and English curricula:

> We have met as AP teachers to see if we could take a look at the curriculum as far as when courses are offered, to try and coordinate that. For instance, with the AP American History that I'm teaching to 12th graders, a lot of those kids are also involved in AP English. Well, in AP English they study basically world authors...We're trying to maybe coordinate it [so]...they would take AP European History to coordinate [with] the European authors...[and] American authors...while they were taking American History...Whether we'll we able to do that or not I don't know...We have to flip flop. For instance, the European [History] AP class is now the 11th grade, the American History AP is 12th grade... [T29-6CO]

In a traditionally run school, a math teacher discusses the introduction of an honors program:

> The honors program...has been really important as far as my particular classes go. Because I see such a need for some students to be able to go ahead...[The principal] did give the outline of the program to the teachers at a faculty meeting, went over it, asked us to make comments, have any input. There were a couple of disciplines that felt they needed an additional honors course, maybe in a different area, particularly in science where they wanted to include maybe a third year biology or something of that kind. So the teachers did participate in the final stages...I would say the principal, superintendent, school board were actually ones that made the decisions. [T38-5OK]

Whereas these two changes were relatively modest in scope, some of the decisions in each type of school were also more far-reaching. Respondents talked about efforts to institute interdisciplinary courses, team teaching, block scheduling, cooperative learning, assessment through portfolios, and many of the reforms in good currency. In several cases, the school had received an external grant to institute a change in curriculum. Several of the grants related to interdisciplinary teaching. Here are two accounts, one from a SDM school and one from a traditionally managed school. A department head in the SDM school describes the issue that the school dealt with in this way:

> It's the integration of the curriculum, integration of academic disciplines. English/social studies, science/social studies, science/English, math/science, art/music/social studies, those kinds of combinations...The administration is very enthused about this idea and has been for some time. There is also some enthusiasm on the faculty side in certain little centers. I think generally there's indifference from the faculty about it...I think one of the reasons a lot of people are not actively involved in implementing it is because they feel that's not the problem. It isn't the integration of the curriculum so much as the teaching styles, the teaching methods, the way the material is actually being taught, rather than what is being taught...

> It started a couple of years ago really, with the coming of the [state grant], with coming of the new principal...She started right off...telling us that that's what she wanted...She wanted to have the curriculum integrated...She saw the departmentalization of the building as a real block to learning, and she wanted students to be able to carry over concepts, skill, subject matter, from one period to the next, one class to the next, all day long. We just sort of sat there...The faculty has never actually, as a group, sat down and said yes, we want to do this. Well, they did -- they did actually take a vote saying they wanted to it, but -- how do I describe it? -- it was a vote that was essentially meaningless. [D44-2WA]

The big shift that the principal envisioned has dwindled down to a few isolated changes. The respondent explained that the principal was pushing other changes as well, and she had to cope with a number of serious discipline problems relating to drugs and gangs. These have "sapped a lot of her energy." What has actually changed in practice is: "a small group of two people working in honors English and in biology in ninth grade. United States history...and the junior English are being integrated gradually into American studies...But now we've just lost one of our key people...Another of the key people is retiring next year...And then at the ninth grade we're integrating flight and the history of science and technology into the social studies curriculum." The respondent explains that interested teachers are carrying the ball on the changes. The principal is very receptive:

> She does everything she can to open up schedules so we can put programs in. Although it hasn't happened yet. We don't actually have any programs in the schedule that are really integrated. But she says she'll do all she can, and I'm sure she will. [D44-2WA]

The department head's comments vacillate from supportive to skeptical about the change in curriculum. He seems to think that most of the ideas are interesting and worthwhile, but he is conscious of the blockages in the system. Among other things, much of the faculty is middle-aged or older ("you do need a young, invigorated staff, and we don't have it"), and they have seen many reforms come and go. He says, "A lot of the good things, so-called good things, have turned out to be unsuccessful. And it's made a lot of people very cynical and indifferent about where it's going." Nevertheless, he believes that the principal and a few interested faculty are promoting useful change.

Compare this situation to a non-SDM school which has been discussing a similar

curricular change. In the non-SDM school, the change is actually being implemented. When asked about any decisions relating to curriculum change or new program, a department head tells the interviewer:

> It's about cross-curriculum. It's an attempt at cross-curriculum teaching. And there's a science, math, English, and social studies teacher, and they share the same hundred students. I guess they have the same consecutive four periods. I mean they revolve, but -- and a mutual planning period. And I don't know if it's working... Apparently a grant was received from, I guess, the federal government, and the teachers volunteered to do this. And I guess I would like very much to know exactly what's going on. I hear little bits and pieces...They're doing cooperative learning, cross-curriculum teachers. So it's sort of been imposed on the school system.[D39-9VA]

She goes on to say that the principal and the school superintendent developed the idea. "That is their grant, and it...certainly reflects [the principal's] interest. That's the kind -- the way she thinks education should go. And that's fine. I don't know whether it should or shouldn't." The respondent is concerned mainly with the way that the change has affected scheduling: there is this lump of four courses that can not be moved or reassigned.

What concerns her even more is the suspicion that the program is going to expand. She mentions "lots of rumors...that it's going to really just get broader and broader till pretty much the whole school is going to be doing that. The existing 9th and 10th grades, they're going to pick up another 9th grade next year, and that's going to be three grade levels. And then they're going to follow those 10th graders to -- and it will be four grade levels in two years." She is concerned that the faculty is not being kept informed. She talks about dislike of the idea among the teachers and suspicion of the principal:

> There's been a lot of resistance to her and to her ideas of cooperative learning. [The interviewer asks: How is that resistance manifested?] Real unpleasantness at faculty meetings...We're pretty much ignoring the bright kids...[Aside from a senior AP class and a junior honors class in the English department], that's it, and the rest of the classes -- all the classes are just heterogeneously grouped. And we're going to lose them, I think, the very bright kids. And so it's that group of people that really feel that way very strongly, and I agree. [D39-9VA]

She goes on to say that teachers have been informed in small ways about the cross-

curriculum innovation. There was a video presentation. An optional workshop was held on the first day of school, and she attended the session on cooperative learning. She went to the English teacher involved in the program and asked to watch what was going on ("I said I'm not observing you"), but the teacher wasn't receptive to the idea. "So nobody knows quite what's happening and if it's working, and maybe we won't know until they're tested. But I'd like to see it."

In both these schools, we see a principal with convictions about interdisciplinary teaching, whose interests are fortified by an external grant. In both schools, the principal faces a largely skeptical faculty. The SDM school apparently does better in defusing unpleasantness because it provides opportunities for teachers to talk about the plans and even vote on them. However, over almost exactly the same period of time, the traditional school seems to have moved farther along in implementation.

A principal in a third school discusses the difficulty in instituting interdisciplinary teaching. Her school has a system for SDM to which she is committed. She believes that people have to be included in decision making if they are to learn, and that this applies to teachers and to students. But the principal goes on to talk about the problems that such participation poses to the introduction of interdisciplinary courses.

> Part of my mission while I'm here is to help create ways that teachers and students can learn in interdisciplinary ways. It's very difficult given the structure of the school. The department heads are department heads of departments... It's like a little feudal system and each of these people are in charge of -- and they're kind of feudal lords and they dish out favors to the teachers...I usually try to bring in the department chairmen of the interdepartmental course and have them work out the guidelines for that course, and then make the decisions about the budget for that course...The interdepartmental courses so far get some funding through pilot projects...[One course] is funded through a foundation grant. [The interviewer asks: And this ninth grade social studies and English?] That's funded though the department. I hope it will happen but it may not happen. I don't know. That's the problems of democracy. [A13-6MA]

What we see here are several schools embarked on the same kind of reform. In the first SDM school, the principal has great plans, but these get bogged down in constant discussions in the decision-making bodies. The non-SDM school is moving along to interdisciplinary courses more rapidly, but some teachers are suspicious and evidently

unwilling to give more than token assent. The principal of the SDM school in the last comment winds up by emphasizing that shared decision making is a process with inherent uncertainty. When teachers are involved in decision making, they may choose to reject a proposal, modify it, make compromises that bend it out of shape, or put it on hold (a common occurrence in these schools) for long periods of time.

In terms of the question that we began with, whether teachers' participation increases the school's focus on curricular issues, we see no evidence in our data that this is so. Schools that are traditionally managed evidently devote as much of their attention to decisions about curriculum as do SDM schools.

Student Issues

Nine respondents from SDM schools, five of them from one school, talked about student issues that were not related to curriculum or classwork. As Table 1 shows, four of these issues were responses to student initiatives. One was a request from the student senate to change election rules to allow students who were failing in school to be elected to the student senate, on the grounds that those students were entitled to representation, too. Another was a request from the student senate to hold a winter carnival. A third was a student proposal to set up a student jury to deal with cases of alleged cheating.

The school in which student issues were most often raised had a distinctive student-oriented philosophy. In important ways the school was organized around commitments to student advising. Each member of the faculty was assigned a group of students to advise, and s/he stayed with the same students for their entire career in the school. It appears to be the student-centered philosophy, rather than anything intrinsic to shared decision making, that brought student issues to the forefront in this school. But it is important to recognize that the philosophy was developed through a process of shared decision making, and it took root and thrived in the climate of continuing teacher involvement in collective management of school affairs.

Three respondents in non-SDM schools also discussed a student issue, none of them as the result of student initiatives. Just as they put less emphasis on discipline, so SDM schools give a bit more attention to student-centered issues. But the numbers of people

who discuss students remain small.

Issues Involving Pedagogy

Teaching was a subject that was hardly mentioned as the focus of school decisions. Only 3 people out of 191 discussed a pedagogical issue. One of these was a vocational teacher who discussed summer workshops that aimed to help teachers vary their teaching styles. He spoke of the issue in these terms:

> Getting the students more involved...Trying to get the barrier between the students and the staff [down]...And I think all of our teachers have taken this and tried to improve their teaching and improve the ability of their students to get over this hurdle, which apparently they have...[T]o get the students to ask questions more and be more outgoing and not afraid of what their peers are saying about them. And this [workshop] seemed to help quite a bit. [T45-15UT]

Inasmuch as the number of people mentioning teaching was so low, there was no appreciable difference between SDM and non-SDM schools.

Issues that Arose Outside the School

A few of the issues that respondents discussed came onto the school agenda because of mandates from above. One of the schools was dealing with state-mandated testing and a state-imposed system for review of principals' performance. Another school had to respond to changes in state curriculum requirements. At the district level, school boards and superintendents required school changes in such things as the development of a school improvement plan, change in the number of class periods per day, and changes in supervision of study halls. Two schools were involved in accreditation reviews. (These issues appear in Tables 1 and 2 under topic.)

Relationship of SDM to Emphasis on Curriculum and Teaching

By and large, the adoption of SDM in high schools does not appear related to a concentration on school-wide issues of teaching and learning. Those schools that had systematic and formal structures for teacher participation in decision making did not deal appreciably more with curriculum, pedagogy, or student issues than traditionally managed

schools. In a few cases, as we will see in the next section, those decisions that they made showed a greater responsiveness to current curricular reform prescriptions. However, there is little indication that the inclusion of teachers in the process shifted the focus of attention. We recall that we are talking about only 12 schools, and each of them is unique in important ways. Nevertheless, we see little support for the contention that SDM is justified by its disposition for turning schools' focus to teaching, learning, and student issues. The time- and energy-consuming process of collegial decision making may even delay the introduction of curricular reforms -- or stall them from getting implemented at all.

In one school, a teacher gave this response to the question of whether shared decision making affected what goes on inside the classroom:

> It can. But it's a lot easier to have it not affect it. I mean, it's very difficult to figure out how to affect what goes on in the classroom...In some ways it [SDM] can improve the climate of the school. It can make people happier about their job, it make them feel more connected. I mean, it comes through the back door. If the person's happy about the job, that's going to come across to the kids in the classrooms. But really, it's so -- I mean, you go in, the bell rings, I close my door and that's my kingdom. So whether or not I want to spend the whole period writing on the chalkboard and talking to the kids, or whether or not I want to sit down in the middle of them and talk about something,...I mean, that's up to me. I mean, it's very tough to make a change in the classroom. You have to change attitudes, and it's tough to change attitudes. And it's tough to make people even want to change. People don't like to change. [D42-9FL]

There are suggestions in the data, however, that if curricular issues are addressed and changes implemented, SDM schools do a better job of marshalling teachers' support. Teachers have a sense of ownership, and so long as most of them stay in the school and are not replaced by new teachers who have no such commitment, they are apt to maintain their support for the innovation.

In a number of traditionally organized schools, teachers turned against decisions because they had not had a voice in them. One school changed from a six-period to a seven-period day largely at the principal's behest, although he had given them the opportunity to vote on the change at the last meeting of the year, and they approved. One teacher explained that they did so only to get out of the meeting and go home, not

realizing that they were committing themselves to anything. In the fall they came back to find the new schedule in place and were outraged. As the school year went on, many of the teachers came to like the seven-period schedule. But they were still so incensed at the unilateral way the change had been instituted that they voted to return to the six-period day. Thus mechanisms that create a sense of ownership of decisions among teachers, or "buy-in," as several teachers phrase it, are valuable for sustaining reform.

How Innovative Are Decisions?

We now turn to the second proposition: that decisions in which teachers participate are more creative and innovative than decisions in schools where administrators call the shots. The institution of a process of shared decision making is itself an innovation, and in some cases it overturns many established preconceptions and operating procedures of long years' standing. But aside from the SDM process itself, do the decisions made in SDM schools represent more fundamental change than those made in more traditional schools?

We judged as more innovative those decisions that had to do with interdisciplinary teaching, block scheduling, de-tracking, introducing hard content for all students -- in short, the current reform agenda -- as well as some local decisions that responded to the particular needs of students in the school. In those terms, we found that SDM schools are more innovative. While at least two of the traditional schools have instituted important new activities on their own initiative,[7] almost all of the SDM schools have shown receptivity to a variety of innovations. However, the formal participation of teachers in decision making does not appear to be the main mechanism that leads to change. Rather in our sample it is usually the arrival of a reform-minded principal or superintendent that initiates both SDM and other reforms. SDM seems to be a product, more than a cause, of reform energies.

It seems clear that the climate in our SDM schools is conducive to awareness and trial of new approaches. Among the changes that SDM schools discussed and implemented are open interdepartmental negotiations around allocation of the school's budget, interdepartmental courses and teaching, block scheduling, teacher-organized staff

development, and special programs for at-risk students. Usually the impetus for change came from above. In two of the most innovative schools, a principal came in with a reform agenda. SDM was one, but only one, change that she introduced. Since four out of the six SDM schools had adopted the SDM process within the previous four years, change in the decision-making apparatus coincided with changes or attempted changes in other areas of the school.

One of the most provocative cases was a school that got a new principal about two years prior to our first visit. It was a school that ten years before had been considered highly effective with its largely white student body. In the intervening years, the student population had changed, and many more lower-income students and students of color were in attendance. The principal arrived determined to make the school more responsive to their needs. Some of the teachers were not convinced that the school needed drastic change. The watchword was: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." Battlelines formed around the issue of whether the school was "broke."

The principal initiated shared decision making. She also showed herself ready to back any teacher who had good ideas about what to do. She convened a group of reform-minded teachers and spent a weekend with them brainstorming about ways to improve the school. She encouraged them, and any other teacher who wanted to make change, to bring forward proposals. One of the first ideas to get off the ground was a special program for students at risk of dropping out of school -- students for whom the regular program was not working. The idea came from two young special education teachers, relative newcomers in the school. The principal helped them to get support from a business association and a foundation, and gave them space and encouragement to recruit students and begin operation.

Some of the older teachers in the building, the "established leadership," were outraged. Here was a new untenured teacher with an office of her own, a telephone, and a computer, while they limped along with no private space. Here were a group of troublesome kids, coming to school late, making noise in the halls during class time, eating in the classroom, breaking school rules and setting a bad example for others. Classes in the new program were small, while they were dealing with larger numbers of

students to take up the slack. Their reaction was vehement. The at-risk program remained, but they stiffened their opposition to any further attempts to make an end run around the departments and department heads and the union leadership. And they planned a counterattack.

An early evidence of the counter-reformation was a complete overhaul of the structure of the shared-decision making body. Its constitution was altered to include representatives elected by the departments. The membership became more heavily status-quo. More of its members thought that the school was not "broke" and needed only modest tinkering.

Undaunted, the principal, in collaboration with a small group of like-minded staff, planned to establish six schools-within-a-school. The intent was to break down the anonymity of the large urban high school and give students a "home," a set of adults who knew them and were available to help, and a community of classmates. Each mini-school was to have a special focus. But only the global studies "school" actually began operation, and even global studies soon saw the number of students signing up dwindle (some said because teachers counseled students away from it; others said because it wasn't very good). None of the other projected schools-within-a-school made it off the drawing board.

At almost every turn, the principal's plans were thwarted. She did manage to force one change through, even in partial violation of her own SDM principles. She went to the SDM body and told them that the school was going to move to block scheduling, i.e. class periods of double the usual length. They had no choice about whether to go along or not. This was the dictate. Their choice was the particular configuration of the "blocks." Teachers developed a set of alternative plans, and the whole faculty voted on the schedule they preferred. The block schedule went into effect.

After five years, the principal left the school. Some of the teachers said that they always knew she was more interested in making a reputation for herself than in staying the distance.[8] Other teachers mourned her departure. The SDM body planned to take part in selection of a new principal who would advance some of the ideas that she had tried to institute and do it better.

This is a case where the impetus for innovation clearly came from the principal. She went scouting through the faculty for kindred spirits, and teachers in the school believed that she was willing to support anyone who had a reasonable idea for change. Although she had her own pet ideas, such as interdisciplinary teaching and subdivision of the mass impersonal school, she stood ready to promote other suggestions that promised to serve the interests of students. However, her strategies sometimes backfired. Her earliest innovation, the program for at-risk students, created a certain amount of disorder in the building, and the appointment of a young, untenured teacher as its director evoked resentment and an abiding sense of unfairness. It was difficult for her to regain the trust of the established faculty. She managed to accomplish some useful things, but after five years left for another job.

Non-SDM schools also make innovative changes. Two of them are doing so largely because of state demands. One state has mandated periodic standardized testing at particular grade levels, with serious consequences not only for students who do not pass but also for the school (and the principal) that fail to meet certain levels of achievement. This push, combined with a state-required teacher evaluation plan, is creating incentives for school change, largely in the direction of greater emphasis on drill and remediation for students who fail the tests.

Other non-SDM schools are being pushed into change because of directives from the district level. For example, one school responded to a district mandate for peer evaluation of teachers. Teachers were chosen to participate in a training program to learn evaluative techniques, and for a year they were relieved of classroom duties in order to serve as evaluators of other teachers' classroom performance.

Where change originated within the school, non-SDM schools, like SDM schools, usually found the change initiated by the administrators. One school gradually eliminated all its "basic" courses for students who were deemed unready for academic work. One year they phased out the "basic" science courses, then the basic-level math courses, then English, and so on. The intent was to raise the academic content of the courses students were taking. The interviewer asked an assistant principal where the idea for the change came from. She said:

> This is mostly administration. We were trying to show them [teachers] that if we did not put them [students] into regular academic classes, they would never be ready for the top, the entry-level top...Okay, where we got the idea was we went to several workshops that were facilitated and presented by some people from California that had turned a school completely around. Schools, inner-city schools like ours, where kids were not functioning... [A46-14TX]

This administrator talked at length of the opposition to the plan that came from teachers. She said that teachers threw up resistance. When "basic" students were mixed into academic classes, the failure rate was "very, very high." She said:

> Some of the teachers felt like they just couldn't go on, they couldn't go on and the failure rate was our [administrators'] fault. Instead of trying to say, okay, this is where we are at, let's see what we can do with what we have got. No, they just kind of gave up. [A46-14TX]

She said that at least thirty percent of the teachers felt that their kids could not master the essential elements of an academic course "because they were basic students."

However, a department head from the same school indicated that the elimination of basic courses was not a new idea in the school but one that teachers themselves had promoted many years earlier. She said that the school, which serves students from several housing projects, had long had a surfeit of introductory courses, "and there'd be a very few people in what you'd call your academic classes, and even less in honors." Then:

> A number of us rallied many years ago, pushing for advanced courses. We wanted to see some honors, gifted and talented... And that's one of the things that we were fighting for and arguing about way back...back in the '60s. We even got the parents to band together and come up here and speak up for the kids. [D46-3TX]

The principal of this school attributes the move to do away with basic courses to a combination of administration initiatives and "the departments and the campus improvement committee [made up of teachers]." [A46-9B-TX] It appears that he is being diplomatic, because the campus improvement committee wasn't in existence when the abolition of basic courses began. Still, his general point may be right. Teachers had evidently laid the groundwork for the change, and many -- maybe 70%, if the assistant principal's estimate is right -- were already in sympathy with the new policy.

The interchange at this school highlights an important point. Although most of the significant changes[9] that were discussed in both SDM and non-SDM schools reportedly began with administrators, some may have percolated up from the classroom level. Teachers may have had an idea which required structural change and made their preferences known to the principal. After further informational intake and cognitive processing, the principal comes to advocate the change. By then s/he may have lost sight of its origin.

Still new ideas appear to come in surprising numbers from administrators. Administrators are the innovators because they have the resources and the time to learn about new ideas, the opportunity to communicate widely, and the authority to bring the proposals to the attention of the school. Administrators, although extremely busy, have flexible schedules; they are not tied down by the tyranny of class bells. They have offices -- with telephones, and they are in contact with large numbers of people, lay and professional, who bring information and ideas to their notice. They are the ones who are likely to go to the conferences, read the journals, and become enthusiasts for new ideas. As one principal said:

> Teachers have a different point of attachment. I have to keep an eye on the big picture every day. Teachers have to keep an eye on the classroom. It is stepping out of their normal operation [to be a leader] more than it would be for me or another administrator. For one thing, they don't have all the information at their fingertips, and they need information support and assistance. Clearly, teachers are still careful to make sure that they touch bases with administrators, to make sure they're not overstepping their authority. [A06-6BMA]

This last point, that teachers are wary of overstepping the bounds of their authority, is another reasons for teacher conservatism. Several teachers mentioned to us that if they spoke up too much, they could expect retribution, especially if they opposed the principal's ideas or challenged his/her prestige in public.

As a consequence of a constellation of factors, teachers tend to be conventional in their approach to schooling. A teacher describes a proposal made by teachers in her school and characterizes teachers' posture as "old-fashioned" or even "reactionary":

> The faculty was basically saying that we don't want to fool around with all the more modern buzz words like learning styles and so forth...Administrators tend to be very

> much in tune with some of the Education School-based notions. I mean, the whole business about teaching styles seems to be much more popular with administrators than with teachers. In fact, this particular proposal from the teachers could probably very well be described as being somewhat reactionary. It is a very old-fashioned way of looking at the problem... Teachers who were involved here believe that we should try to recapture some of the habits and thought patterns and attitudes from 25 years ago...Being a little nasty about kids who come late to class. [T13-13MA]

In all our schools, those with and without SDM, we see recurrent patterns of teacher conservatism. There are good reasons for such a position. Teachers are the ones who have been battered by the sweep of new fads and fashions through the schools, and they have become disenchanted with the latest nostrums. They are busy trying to help students learn. They are less taken with intriguing ideas about cooperative learning, heterogeneous grouping, block scheduling, and so on, because they are the ones who have to translate the high-sounding slogans into the practical day-to-day work of teaching children. They know they will be given inadequate help and preparation in the effort and that they will be required to "show results" long before it is reasonable to expect results to emerge.

Moreover, they are often so hedged about with state regulations, district rules, and principals' preferences that they see little latitude for change. They are used to following the rules, and their refuge from uncongenial requirements is to close the door and protect the one space that is their own, the classroom.

Of course, in every organization, only a tiny minority of people are apt to develop innovative proposals. Human beings thrive on routine. Too much change is disorienting not only to teachers but to students and parents as well. (For further discussion of teacher beliefs in our 12 schools, see Cambone, forthcoming.)

Teachers do creative things in their own classes. At the classroom level, we heard stories about teachers who developed and implemented interesting curricular units and teaching strategies. But at the level of the school, teachers often appear to wait for administrative encouragement before they put themselves on the line to promote change. The major exception is a small school that opened its doors 13 years before our first visit as a SDM school, where teacher initiative has been a mainstay of the school culture. The

school has established a structure and a climate that encourage teachers to innovate on matters large and small. One teacher said: "[I]f I had a problem during the school day, I was always looking and my mind was always open to how I can fix this. I could go to people and work that out."[T32-3ME] She went on to discuss interdisciplinary math/science teaching, lengthened class periods, and:

> We tried programmed algebra with these students who normally would not have gone into algebra. It was my suggestion, and [head of cluster of departments] said, "All right, fine." So we got the books and went with it. [T32-3ME]

Another teacher talked about the representation of students in the school. He said that "teachers were so in tune to what the kids wanted" that there wasn't much of a problem, but about five years ago he thought there should be a student senate. He went on:

> I began it on my own without any job, just pulling kids together. I did a lot of background work and surveys on how they felt about the school...We started it. We built a constitution and we built a student senate, which I think is a fantastic thing. [T32-5ME]

He also talked about the English coordinator [department head] who wanted to put in a new writing process, "no grammar, no anything, just let the kids write." The head of the cluster of departments, who was "one above the coordinator":

> didn't buy into it that much but let the coordinator have the freedom to do it because he was really sold on it....Our coordinator...went to school for it and sort of did it, and we had a choice for a while, which was a good way...As I began to work with it, I said, Geez, this thing works...I've just seen strides in my kids I couldn't believe. [T32-5ME]

Taking Stock

We are forced to conclude that, in general, the justification for SDM that looks to unleashing teachers' creativity is overoptimistic. Teachers may be well-informed about students, their problems and their capacities, but giving them the SDM franchise does not lead them to translate that knowledge into fundamental school reforms.

Evidence that might disconfirm this conclusion is two-fold. First, as noted, most of the schools that have established SDM are also trying to make other important changes. However, this seems to be the result of a confluence of reform energies rather than a

cause-and-effect sequence.

Second, more teacher initiatives appear in SDM schools, with enterprising teachers undertaking projects at a more frequent rate than in traditional schools. Where this happens, however, we often hear about the not-so-hidden-hand of the principal, suggesting, encouraging, seeking grants, pushing. Only in one small school that began as a SDM school do we see teachers on their own hook taking initiative. There new programs, policies, procedures, and curricula "bubble up" from below. But even in this school, the arrival of a new somewhat unsympathetic principal seems to be dulling teacherly zest.

Yet SDM often seems to improve teachers' morale and their sense of ownership of school decisions. Many teachers believe that their position is respected and their voice heard. They may use that voice to slow down change and modify new ideas to fit better with current practice. But once change comes, they seem more inclined to follow through and support it.

Were the SDM systems in these schools too new to show the hoped-for results? Given more time, will the SDM process mature and yet prove its worth? We have two kinds of evidence on this score. One is the course of SDM in six schools over the 2 1/2 years of our fieldwork. The other is the history of the school with the longest-standing SDM arrangement.

Over the period of fieldwork, we did not see linear progression in the efficacy of SDM in any of the schools. Everywhere there were ups and downs, movement and relapse, optimism and disenchantment. One school that seemed to be making excellent changes in curriculum and school organization when we first visited was bogged down in controversy on the next visit. A school that was exceedingly proud of its progress at the outset experienced a period of stagnation and then essentially lowered its sights; when we returned, staff had less grandiose expectations and were once again satisfied with the improvements that SDM introduced.

SDM is not a process that, once introduced, matures and flowers. People in these schools talked about constant assaults on its stability. Sometimes the problem was loss of support from outside -- from the superintendent, the union, the school board. Sometimes

it was disillusionment among teachers. In several cases a unilateral action by the principal seemed to undermine the grant of authority to teachers and caused them to become suspicious of the "reality" of SDM. Sometimes a new principal came in who was out of sympathy with SDM and tried to re-take authority. Cuts in budget, too, undermined important elements of the SDM process, such as necessary training for members of the SDM body, stipends for all the hours of work they put in, funds to carry out decisions they had made.

In many cases time may lead to more experience, better-defined procedures and precedents, and greater confidence among members of the SDM body. But it will not necessarily lead to the two features we have examined -- more emphasis on curriculum and teaching or more willingness to innovate. Time and experience may rather lead to a scaling down of aspirations and the transformation of SDM into a routine management system for second- and third-order issues.

One school did not have to go through a transition from principal-centered to teacher-managed procedure because it began as a SDM school. If transition from one state to the other is the most difficult phase of SDM, this school avoided it. It began with a visionary principal who managed to establish a culture of participation and a commitment to the welfare of students. Informal relationships in a school with only 50-odd teachers sustained the philosophy of the school, and this was supplemented by thoughtful staff development and extensive orientation for newcomers.

Yet here time does not appear to have been favorable to the success of SDM. The central tenets of teacher participation, student-centeredness, and teacher responsibility for solving problems were established in the early days, and subsequent years witnessed a series of assaults -- from school board members, changing superintendents, some parents, and a succession of principals with varying degress of attachment to SDM. The shared decision making system remains strong, but some of the school's energy has had to go into protecting itself from attack. As the years go by, the crusading zeal of the founding group is diluted by new staff who lack the same dedication to the school's original principles; it is eroded by fatigue, and it is chipped away by subtle inroads from the current principal. Obviously, time alone will not make SDM more effective.

What Now?

Despite the failure of SDM to live up to its hype, there is something intrinsically appealing about the notion that school administration derives its just powers from the consent of the governed, at least the adult governed. At a time when industry has moved toward greater worker participation in management, it seems only fair that teachers, too, have a say in conditions that affect their work lives.

Moreover, it does seem to have potential as one strand of a larger reform effort. It appears to give teachers a forum in which to express their concerns and, in many cases, the opportunity to change conditions that interfere with their work. It may yield benefits in professionalism, morale, and commitment, at least for a sizable fraction of teachers affected.

However, if SDM is to lead to significant improvements in teaching and learning, change in the decision-making structure is not enough. On its own, SDM is simply a set of arrangements for teacher participation, a process without a direction. It can be used to vent gripes or make changes in the placement of teachers' mailboxes and littering in the cafeteria. But many people inside and outside education believe that schools need radical change in order to engage students' minds. If we wait for teachers in each school to chart the required course, we are likely to have a long wait.

Where is the direction going to come from? Currently much of the discourse about educational reform is taking place at the national level. A number of professional groups and blue-ribbon commissions have already stated what the School Reforms of the Nineties must be (National Governors Association 1990, National Research Council 1989, American Association for the Advancement of Science 1989, National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools 1989). There is a push toward national-level solutions, such as national testing and national certification standards for teachers (National Council on Education Standards and Testing 1992). It is paradoxical that the popularity of the rhetoric of shared decision making coincides with a time when nationalizing trends are visible in policy.

The substance of current proposals for reform is two-fold: (1) "hard" content, not just facts and skills, but an emphasis on understanding, critical thinking, and application,

through students' social construction of their own knowledge, (2) for all students, not just the academically talented or the college bound.

As Porter et al. (1990) point out, there is no necessary link between the reform goal of hard content for all and processes of teacher empowerment or shared decision making. Darling-Hammond (1988) attempts to provide a link. She proposes that empowerment strategies can yield hard content if they are supported by (1) regulation of teacher preparation, both preservice and inservice, teacher certification, and selective hiring, so that the quality of the teaching pool is substantially upgraded; (2) teacher control over technical decision making, so that they can control their work environments; and (3) ongoing peer review of practice, to maintain high quality of teacher performance. Whether or not such additional policies would help to focus shared decision making on "teaching for understanding," in their absence there is certainly no guarantee -- or even likelihood -- that SDM would move high schools in that direction. Our data do not suggest that greater teacher control over school decisions focuses more attention on curriculum, let alone on a reorientation of curriculum to emphasize understanding and application.

But whatever goals come to the fore and wherever they are set, teachers must come to accept and believe in them. Without teacher commitment, even the best-conceptualized reform is destined for failure. SDM helps to provide commitment, certainly for the teachers who participate and usually for those who are reluctant to take on SDM tasks but are willing to go along. When it works well, SDM is a mechanism by which teachers come to own decisions and work to make them fruitful.

SDM of itself does not set direction or even, in most of our schools, enable school people to define and agree on their own direction. What it does provide is a forum and a scheduled set of occasions where teachers and administrators come together and interact around school affairs. It can be, although it has not often functioned in this way, a place where new knowledge enters the school. When we turn to the literature on knowledge utilization (e.g., Huberman and Miles 1984, Fullan 1991), we see that new knowledge needs to be adapted by local people before it influences school decisions. Louis and Dentler (1988) describe the "social processing" that has to take place as school people

examine new information and test its relevance and how it might be used in the school. People do not take new research findings or new ideas from journals and implement them. Rather they have to engage in an interactive conversation around the new knowledge, assessing its promise and its limits and tailoring it to the unique conditions of the local setting.

This view is reinforced by the literature on organizational learning, which shows that organizations do not learn through the individual learning of staff members however talented. The organization learns only when it domesticates new knowledge, pokes it and shapes it and adds its own brand of seasoning. The new knowledge has to be shared, its meaning for the organization has to be constructed through interactive discourse, and it has to accepted by a consensus in the organization. (See, e.g., Bartunek and Moch 1991, Kumar and Thibodeaux 1990). The organization has to provide opportunities for discourse, for conversation, for argument and counterargument, so that staff re-craft the knowledge into a form that fits the environment and the culture of the place. Group discussion transmutes alien information into local knowledge that smells as though it belongs in the family.

The SDM body can be the place where such ongoing conversation takes place. It can be the locus for the social construction of knowledge that will improve the school. Because there are few venues where high school teachers come together across departments, meet with administrators, and talk about real issues that face the school, the SDM body is a unique resource. It can be the place where good information -- from research, from national reports, from journals, from others' experience, from their own experience, and from sound reasoning -- can be applied to the issues at hand.

Our data show that SDM bodies do not work quite that way. They display scant receptivity to research and analytic information, or to the academic conversation that one teacher speaks slightingly of as "Ed School stuff." Still the SDM body retains the potential for organizational learning. It can be the site where school people consider reforms and perhaps tailor them to fit the needs of their students, and their own.

Such pious hopes notwithstanding, our data show that most SDM schools in our sample, and they include schools in some of the widely touted reform districts, are not

places where teachers focus school decision making on teaching and learning. They are not places where teachers stress innovation or craft creative strategies to improve student achievement. In fact, in most of the SDM schools we studied, "empowered" teachers tend to use their power to slow down the pace of change. It may be wise that they do. Some changes probably should be re-thought and re-fashioned in order to fit the needs of students and of teachers in the building. But some of the slowdown seems to be born of tiredness and overwork, a feeling that things are OK as they are, and a disinclination to take on anything new unless pushed.

There is evidence that teachers gain a sense of satisfaction by having a say about decisions. They tend to feel better respected and more professional. Teachers from schools without SDM say they wish they had a stronger voice in what their schools do. But participant satisfaction is gained at a high price -- for some. Those teachers who take an active part in SDM work long hours, give up opportunities to work more directly with their own students and on their own teaching, and take on responsibilities (such as setting attendance policy, managing discipline, and making budget allocations) that used to be the province of administrators -- administrators who, as several teachers reminded us, are much better paid than they are. Active teacher participants in shared decision making like the social and collegial aspects of SDM, as well as the chance to help steer the boat. They enjoy the opportunity to get to know people in other departments and work cooperatively with other adults. Those who don't like these parts of the job don't get involved to start with or else quickly drop out. Some participants find the administrative aspect of the work appealing and plan to go on in administration.

Still, it is hard to avoid the sense that in most of the SDM schools we studied, teachers are being co-opted. They are given a limited role in decision making and one that can be withdrawn at almost any time. Most of them say that, for all the SDM machinery, the principal is in charge -- and most say that the principal ought to be in charge because s/he is accountable for the school. Because of their awareness that their preferences can be overridden if they conflict with those of the principal or district administrators, they self-censor what they propose. Canny administrators, therefore, can manipulate the SDM process with small cues about where the zone of acceptability ends.

Should teachers actually propose an action that meets administrative resistance, everybody knows who will win.

So teachers are being given a measure of influence over limited issues, some of which (like students coming tardy to class) they care deeply about. They gain a sense of ownership, that in return commits them to following through on decisions. Teachers who take part in SDM are more likely to implement school decisions and perhaps sustain them over time. So far, it looks like an OK deal for teachers, but perhaps not a great one for students.

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NOTES

1. We are using the term "teacher empowerment" as a synonym for "shared decision making." However, the term sometimes has different overtones. For example, it has been used to describe changes that came about through the efforts of teachers and their partisans, often directed against the principal.

2. Nine of the schools are located in major urban centers, one in a small city, and two in rural areas. The socioeconomic status of students' families, as reported by school staff, is low-to-working class or low-to-middle class in nine schools, mainly middle class in two schools. One school serves primarily upper middle class students. Three schools serve populations composed almost exclusively of students of color. Seven others have substantial minority populations. Two are predominantly white.

3. Bjork (1991) did a total census of school decision in one high school in the state of Washington over a 17-month period. Her definition of "decision" was "an observable choice of a specific action in which one or more building administrators participate." Although her coding categories are not the same as those used here, there are marked similarities in the kinds of decisions she identified.

4. Many people discussed multiple decisions. We selected the one that they chose to follow through on in their description of how the school went about making the decision. In a few cases, where respondents did not describe the decision-making process, we selected the issue that they spent most time discussing.

5. Numbers in brackets after a quotation are the code letters attached to interviews. The first letter identifies the respondent's position: A is administrator; D is department head; T is teacher; X is other, such as guidance counselor or librarian. The number following the letter is the identification number of the school. The next number is the respondent's ID. A "B" following the number indicates a second interview with the same person. The final letters identify the state.

6. The fact that the three schools of color in our sample, each of which had an African American or Latino principal, did not implement shared decision making is an interesting observation. We had actually chosen one of them explicitly because it was expected to have shared decision making. It was in a district that had adopted a widely publicized school-based management

reform with teacher participation. But when we went to the school, we found that teachers had little or no say.

7. That is, aside from changes mandated from above. One non-SDM school was the only school in our sample introducing portfolios throughout the school.

8. Many teachers, in this and other schools, said that administrators come and go but teachers are in it for the long haul. They have to stay and mop up the mess after administrators' "innovations."

9. By "significant changes," I mean changes that had a relatively direct influence on curriculum or instruction or student careers. Teachers did initiate large numbers of changes that had to do with eliminating interruptions or intrusions into the classroom (e.g., public address announcements), making discipline more consistent across the school, reducing the number of students who came tardy to class, creating a more orderly environment, expanding the number of after-school activities, scheduling tests and trips, etc. Many of these teacher initiatives were important for improving the quality of school life, but did not deal directly with student learning.